

The Press Release.

First-of-its-kind program to stop tractor rollover deaths announced

Farmers join UVM Extension Associate Dean, government officials at Sept. 28 launch

MORRISVILLE, Vt.—For the first time, Vermont farmers have access to a program that makes tractor safety equipment affordable and simple to order. The University of Vermont (UVM) Extension announces today the Vermont Rebates for Roll Bars program, one of two programs of its kind in the United States. It reimburses farmers 70 percent of the cost of their rollover protection kit—a roll bar and seatbelt—up to a savings of \$765, and provides help to farmers with identifying and pricing the appropriate rollover kits for their tractors.

According to U.S. Department of Labor statistics, a farmer is 800 percent more likely to die while working than individuals in other jobs. The leading cause of these deaths is tractor overturns. The Northeast has the highest rate of tractor overturns in the country. The most recent tractor rollover fatality in Vermont was Bruce Bakaian, who died in Wheelock on July 31.

To launch his program, farmers and administrators of Vermont Rebates for Roll Bars will gather at noon on Tuesday, Sept. 28 at Under Orion Farm at 1009 Ducharme Road in Marshfield. UVM Extension Associate Dean Richard LeVitre, Secretary of Agriculture Roger Allbee and Department of Health Commissioner Wendy Davis will speak in support of this new effort.

“I grew up on a dairy farm in southern Vermont and know how careful you have to be, especially on side hills,” says Will Ameden, owner of Under Orion Farm in Marshfield, a 250-acre diversified organic farm. “I was also an EMT for 12 years, so I’ve seen first hand the result of not having proper rollover protection on your tractor.”

Vermont’s program is administered by the Northeast Center for Agricultural and Occupational Health (NEC), the organization behind a similar program in New York that has successfully accomplished a ten-fold increase in tractor rollover protection installation since the program’s inception in 2007. Cost and difficulty ordering the appropriate equipment were identified by NEC as the two key barriers to getting rollover protection on tractors.

“The Vermont Rebates for Roll Bars program will save lives and reduce serious injuries in Vermont as farmers step forward to participate in the program,” says Dean of UVM Extension Doug Lantagne. “Rollover protection devices on tractors are highly effective in protecting farmers if they take the steps to install and use them on their equipment.” A roll bar and seatbelt are 99 percent effective in preventing death and serious injury in the event of a rollover.

“Our farmers are the backbone of our economy and communities,” says Secretary Allbee. “The work they do provides us with fresh, quality foods and milk and maintains our open, working landscape that we as Vermonters enjoy every day and that draws visitors to our state each year. But there are many inherent risks that our farmers face everyday. The Vermont Rebates for Roll Bars program helps to mitigate the risks of tractor rollovers and will certainly help to decrease injuries on the farm. Leading sponsor, Cooperative Insurance Companies, has committed \$45,000 to the program over the next three years. UVM Extension is seeking additional funding from other public and private sources.

Vermont tractor owners may call toll-free **877-ROPS-R4U (877-767-7748)** for more information or to register for a rollover kit.

